

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DURBAN 00395 01 OF 02 061609Z

ACTION AF-10

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HA-05 IO-13 SCS-06 CA-01 /089 W

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FM AMCONSUL DURBAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2976

INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 DURBAN 0395

PRETORIA ALSO FOR DATT

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINR, PORS, MILI, SF, MZ, WZ

SUBJ: THE SISAL CURTAIN: SA STEPS UP SECURITY PRECAUTIONS

ALONG NATAL BORDER WITH SWAZILAND AND MOZAMBIQUE

REF: 77 DURBAN A-54

1. SUMMARY: IN THE PAST YEAR THE SAG HAS STEPPED UP POLICE AND ARMY PRESENCE IN NORTH-EASTERN NATAL, ADJACENT TO MOZAMBIQUE AND SWAZILAND. WHILE THERE IS NO INDICATION THE LOW-LEVEL OF INFILTRATION BY ANC/PAC SUPPORTERS THROUGH THE REGION HAS INCREASED IN THAT PERIOD, IT IS APPARENT THE SAG IS APPREHENSIVE AND IS TAKING EARLY, PRECAUTIONARY STEPS TO DEAL WITH IT. MOST CONCRETE STEP IS A PROJECT, NOW ABOUT TWO-THIRDS COMPLETED, TO PLANT A 20-FOOT WIDE STRIP OF SISAL ALONG THE ENTIRE 35 MILE BORDER WITH SWAZILAND AND NEARLY THE ENTIRE 55-MILE BORDER WITH MOZAMBIQUE. THE SAG APPARENTLY
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PAGE 02 DURBAN 00395 01 OF 02 061609Z

BELIEVES THE SISAL WILL DETER INFILTRATION, SIMPLIFY AERIAL VERIFICATION THAT INFILTRATION HAS TAKEN PLACE AND PRESENT A BARRIER TO THE MOVEMENT OF TRACKED VEHICLES. MEANWHILE AMERICAN MISSIONARIES IN THE REGION DO NOT SEE ANY INCREASED OR IMMINENT THREAT TO THEIR SAFETY AND REPORT A CONTINUED LOW LEVEL OF POLITICIZATION AMONG THE LARGELY RURAL, TRADITIONAL POPULATION. THEY DID REPORT, HOWEVER, THAT THE S.A. SECURITY

POLICE HAVE BEEN CONCERNED ABOUT ANNUAL CONOFF VISITS TO THE REGION AND HAVE QUESTIONED THEM ON OUR ACTIVITIES. END SUMMARY

2. MBABANE EMBOFF PERLOW AND DURBAN POLOFF FUGIT RECENTLY MADE A FOUR-DAY VISIT TO THE TONGALAND AREA OF NATAL (THAT AREA OF NORTH-EASTERN NATAL BETWEEN SWAZILAND AND THE INDIAN OCEAN AND BORDERING ON MOZAMBIQUE), MEETING WITH AMERICAN MISSIONARIES, OR MISSIONARIES AFFILIATED WITH US MISSION GROUPS, AT FIVE SEPARATE STATIONS. OFFICERS ALSO MET, UNOFFICIALLY, WITH A SA ARMY MAJOR, JOSE OLIVIERA, AT JOZINI. OLIVIERA, A FORMER PORTUGUESE SECRET POLICE AND ARMY OFFICER WHOM FUGIT KNEW IN ANGOLA, SOUGHT OUT OFFICERS DESPITE INJUNCTION NOT TO DO SO FROM THE NATAL COMMAND.

3. PURPOSE OF ANNUAL TRIP IS TO ASSESS SECURITY SITUATION IN THIS SENSITIVE FRONTIER AREA AND MAINTAIN CONTACT WITH US MISSIONARIES WHOSE SAFETY COULD BECOME AFFECTED IF LOCAL TRIBAL FEUDING OR INFILTRATION INCREASED. CONSENSUS OPINION OF MISSIONARIES, AND OF MAJOR OLIVIERA, IS THAT FEUDING BETWEEN MNGOMEZULU FACTIONS (77 MBABANE A-19) IS THE MOST SERIOUS IMMEDIATE CONCERN BUT THAT THIS IS UNLIKELY TO THREATEN MISSIONARIES. BOTH THE SA AND SWAZI ARMIES REGULARLY PATROL FRONTIER SEPARATING THE TWO FACTIONS, AND THE BORDER POST AT INGWAVUMA IS NOW CLOSED, IMPEDING RAIDING FROM BOTH SIDES. THIS MILITARY PRESENCE ALSO SERVES TO INHIBIT PAC ATTEMPTS TO USE THE FEUD AS COVER FOR INFILTRATION INTO SA. (MBABANE 1295).
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PAGE 03 DURBAN 00395 01 OF 02 061609Z

4. OF MORE SIGNIFICANCE TO THE SAG IS THE MEDIUM AND LONG-RANGE POTENTIAL FOR INCREASED INFILTRATION OF MEN AND WEAPONS INTO SA AND POSSIBLE CONDUCT OF GUERILLA WAR IN THE REGION. NO ONE OFFICERS SPOKE WITH COULD ESTIMATE WHEN THIS WAS LIKELY TO COME ABOUT BUT ALL SAW MOZAMBIQUE, RATHER THAN SWAZILAND, AS MORE LIKELY POTENTIAL JUMPING-OFF POINT. MAJOR OLIVIERA CONCEDED SOME INFILTRATION WAS OCCURRING AND THAT WHILE INCREASED SECURITY POLICE PATROLS ALONG THE MOZAMBIQUE BORDER HAD APPREHENDED SOME INFILTRATORS, OTHERS HAD GOTTEN THROUGH. LOOKING TO THE FUTURE OLIVIERA REGARDED THE AREA AS A LIKELY AVENUE FOR INCREASED INFILTRATION AND STATED THAT THE NEARBY LEBOMBO MOUNTAINS PRESENT AN IDEAL AREA FOR GUERILLA WARFARE AND TRANSIT OF LARGER GROUPS AND UNITS. WITHOUT OFFERING DETAILS HE SAID ARMY AND POLICE HAD STEPPED UP THEIR ACTIVITIES IN ENTIRE AREA AND THAT MORE ARMY CITIZEN FORCE AND COMMANDO UNITS WERE PERFORMING ANNUAL DUTY IN LEBOMBO MOUNTAINS AND COASTAL FLATLANDS TO FAMILIARIZE THEMSELVES WITH TERRAIN.

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PAGE 01 DUBAN 00395 02 OF 02 061608Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 DUBAN 0395

PRETORIA ALSO FOR DATT

5. IN SUPPORT OF OLIVIERA'S STATEMENTS, ALL THE MISSIONARIES CONTACTED REPORTED STEPPED-UP SECURITY POLICE AND ARMY PRESENCE IN REGION, DATING FROM LATE LAST YEAR. THEY SAID SECURITY POLICE ROAD BLOCKS WERE COMMON AND WERE PLACED IN DIFFERENT LOCATIONS, EVEN ON RURAL TRAILS, ON A DAILY BASIS (HOWEVER, TOURING OFFICERS ENCOUNTERED ONLY ONE IN 4 DAYS). THEY SAID ARMY CAMPS WERE NOW ESTABLISHED ON A SEMI-PERMANENT BASIS IN THE BORDER AREA AND MANNED BY A SUCCESSION OF RESERVE UNITS WHOSE FUNCTION SEEMS TO BE A SHOW-OF-FORCE AND INSTALLATION OF THE SISAL BARRIER WHICH HAS BEEN UNDER CONSTRUCTION SINCE LAST YEAR. BARRIER WAS OBSERVED AT ONLY POINT WHERE LOCAL ROADS APPROACHED THE FRONTIER AT INGWAVUMA. IT IS 20-30 FT. WIDE, FURROWED, WITH SMALL PLANTS EVERY FEW FEET. MISSIONARIES STATED THE BARRIER EXTENDS ALONG ENTIRE SWAZI-SA BORDER IN THE REGION AND IS TWO-THIRDS COMPLETED ON THE MOZAMBIQUE-SA BORDER. CHIEF GAME RANGER AT THE NDUMU RESERVE ON THE MOZAMBIQUE BORDER CONFIRMED THAT THE BARRIER WOULD BE CONSTRUCTED ALONG THE

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PAGE 02 DUBAN 00395 02 OF 02 061608Z

ENTIRE MOZAMBIQUE BORDER IN THE REGION EXCEPT FOR THE 9 MILE STRETCH WHERE THE RESERVE ABUTS THE USUTHU RIVER AND MOZAMBIQUE, SINCE THIS WOULD PROHIBIT GAME FROM ACCESS TO THE RIVER

(HOWEVER PARK IS ENCLOSED WITH A SECURITY FENCE TO CONTAIN GAME AND THIS PRESUMABLY DIMINISHES NEED FOR SISAL BARRIER). FYI: SISAL IS AN EXTREMELY TOUGH, FIBROUS PLANT WITH SPINY PROJECTIONS ON ITS LONG, THICK LEAVES, IT REQUIRES LITTLE ATTENTION, GROWS TO FULL SIZE IN 2-3 YEARS AND HAS A 8-10 YEAR LIFE. IT CAN BE PLANTED CLOSE TOGETHER AND, WHEN MATURE, WOULD REPRESENT A FORMIDABLE BARRIER. END FYI. ARMY OFFICERS TOLD ONE MISSIONARY THAT THE SISAL WAS INTENDED BOTH TO IMPEDE INFILTRATION AND TO PERMIT AERIAL SPOTTERS TO ASCERTAIN WHEN SOMEONE HAS PASSED THROUGH THE BARRIER. HE ALSO REPORTEDLY SAID IT WOULD BE EFFECTIVE AGAINST TRACKED VEHICLES BY JAMMING TRACKS WITH FIBROUS LEAVES.

6. OTHER INDICATIONS OF INCREASED CONCERN BY THE SAG WERE IN EVIDENCE AT THE GAME RESERVE WHERE THE VISITORS CAMP, ONE MILE FROM TOZAMBIQUE, IS NOW RINGED WITH A BARBED WIRE TOPPED SECURITY FENCE, HAS AN AREA CLEARED AND MARKED FOR A HELIPAD AND HAS APPARENTLY NEW TWO-WAY RADIO EQUIPMENT. THERE WAS SOME RECENT DISCUSSION IN THE LOCAL PRESS ABOUT CLOSING THE RESERVE BECAUSE OF POSSIBLE SECURITY PROBLEMS BUT THE NATAL PARKS BOARD HAS DETERMINED TO KEEP IT OPEN.

7. LOCAL BLACK POLITICAL ACTIVITY IN THE REGION, MOST OF WHICH IS IN KWAZULU, IS NEGLIBILE AND MOST OF THE OVERWHELMINGLY TRADITIONAL POPULATION ARE APOLITICAL. MOST ABLE, BRIGHT PEOPLE GO SOUTH OR TO THE REEF FOR WORK AND THERE HAS NOT BEEN A SIGNIFICANT BLACK POLITICAL FIGURE IN THE REGION SINCE MTIMKULU WAS ASSASSINATED IN MAY OF LAST YEAR (REFAIR). SUPPORT FOR INKATHA IS, HOWEVER, ON THE INCREASE THROUGHOUT THE AREA THOUGH AS ONE GOES NORTH AND EAST FROM THE ZULU HEARTLAND THE CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 DURBAN 00395 02 OF 02 061608Z

SUPPORT BECOMES WEAKER AND MORE SUPERFICIAL.

8. AFTER CONOFF TRIP TO THE REGION IN JUNE 1977, S.A. SECURITY POLICE VISITED EACH MISSION STATION AND QUESTIONED ALL MISSIONARIES WITH WHOM CONOFF HAD SPOKEN ABOUT WHAT HE SAID, WHERE HE WAS GOING, WHAT HE WANTED TO KNOW AND EVEN WHAT HE ATE. THIS YEAR POLICE VISITED TWO MISSIONS BEFORE CONOFF ARRIVED, TELLING MISSIONARIES THEY KNEW OF VISIT BUT NOT ATTEMPTING DIRECTLY TO INTIMIDATE THEM NOT TO SPEAK FREELY WITH CONOFF.

9. COMMENT: IMPROVERISHED TONGALAND AREA COULD BE ONE OF THE FIRST ARENAS OF GUERILLA WARFARE IN SA. PROBLEMS HOWEVER, APPEAR TO BE SOME TIME IN THE FUTURE AND FOR NOW THERE IS NO THREAT TO U.S. MISSIONARIES OF SUFFICIENT MAGNITUDE TO WARRANT WARNING THEM TO LEAVE THE AREA. THEY ARE COGNIZANT OF THE DANGER INHERENT IN THEIR LOCATION AND, PARTICULARLY IN TERMS OF THE MNGOMEZULU FEUD, ARE BETTER INFORMED THAN WE OF THE SITUATION. THE SA ARMY AND SECURITY POLICE ARE FULLY AWARE

OF, THOUGH NOT QUITE ON TOP OF, THE CURRENT PROBLEMS AND ARE
CLEARLY PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE ONES.
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